PROMENADE

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AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP
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PROMENADE

"The purpose of the American Square Dance Group is to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, and general Americana which comprise American folk culture; to conduct activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with those who hold similar views."

Constitution of the A.S.D.G.

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The books people read are as revealing as the songs they sing! In the last issue of Promenade we offered a listing of books of interest to folklorists today. In this issue we're presenting a sampling of books available (for 25¢, single copies sent postage free on receipt of price) to readers some eighty years ago.

These titles, with their accurate descriptions, were advertised in The Grant Campaign Songster, published by Robert M. De Witt, New York, 1868. We found the titles thought-provoking and stimulating, covering as they do a wide range of subjects. For instance;

The Crawling Snake. "This famous Scout and Indian Scalper went far ahead of the most cunning Indian in tricks and stratagems. He could crawl right through the best watched camp, and knife an Indian in the heart of his encampment." This summary intrigues us! We've never heard of a person who was knifed in his encampment.

You can supply your own commentary for the following titles.

Margot

The Pledge; Or, The First Step To Fortune. Never was a noble lesson taught in a more interesting style.

The Bottle; Or, The First Step To Crime. All the interest of a first-class romance; the utility of a sermon.

The Mysterious Foundling; Or, The Gamester's Fate. Shows in striking manner the terrible results of gambling.

Kate Penrose; Or, Life And Its Lessons. This novel is full of instruction and wise counsel and interest too.

Palace of Infamy; Or, The Slave Women of England. The title expresses the interesting nature of the revealings in it.

Rival Lovers; Or, The Midnight Murder. Appalling dark are the shadows in this store-- with gleams of light.

Female Depravity; Or, The House of Death. Terribly real are the scenes in this very strange story.

(continued on next page)

Frank Rivers; Or, The Dangers Of The Town. This book serves as a beacon to show the rocks and sands of life.

Beautiful Segar Girl; Or, The Mysteries of Broadway. An entrancing tale- replete with scenes of love, mystery, murder.

The Mutineer; Or, Heaven's Vengeance. A dashing story of life on the turbulent sea-- mostly too true.

The Baronet's Bride; Or, The Husband's Secret. Mystery! Mystery! From the first page to the last.

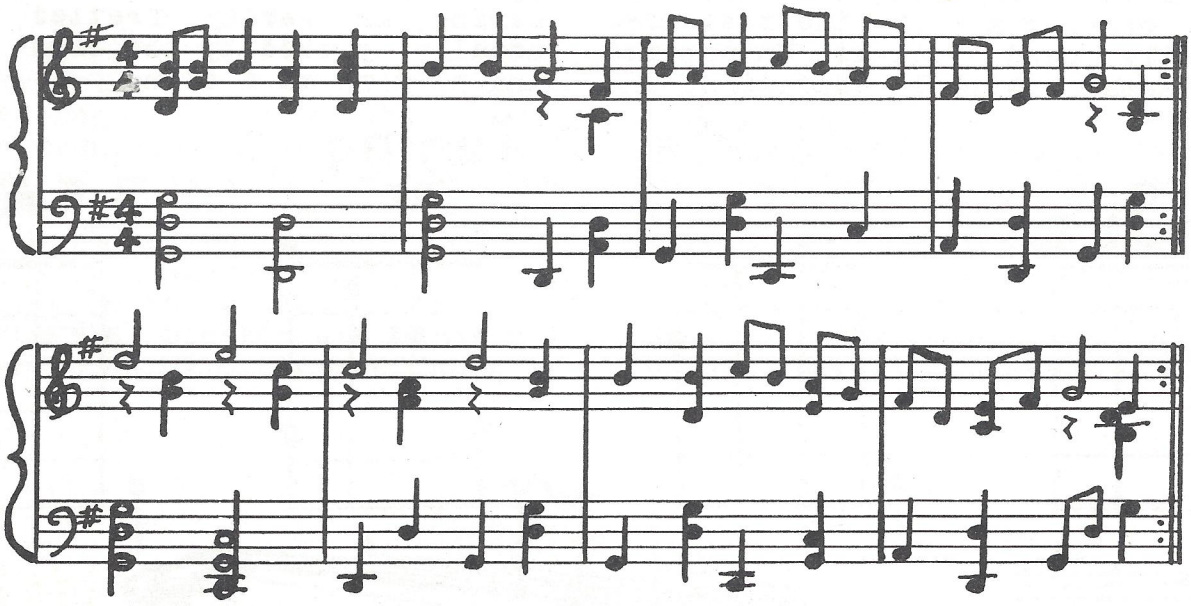
Every Lady Her Own Shoemaker. By this valuable treatise any lady can make neat shoes.

Old Granny Hare

This variation of an old Southern square dance tune and song was collected by Margot from the fiddle-playing of Rufus Underwood, of Kodak, Tennessee. Rufus was an old-time fiddler, and a very skilled one. His version of "Old Granny Hare" is a particularly danceable tune.

There is a version of this song-dance in Traditional Music of America, by Ira W. Ford. The title in this collection is given as "Old Molly Hare," and Mr. Ford gives an interesting description of the tradition behind this tune which seems to date pretty far back in the folk history of this country.

The piano arrangement is by Gladys Mayo. For the sake of clarity we are presenting this arrangement in four-four time but we suggest that, after the tune is familiar, you play it in two-four.



Where's Your Pitch Pipe?

a collection of Banjo tunings by Stuart Jamieson

Illustrations Irv. Friedman.

To most musicians, tuning up is a ritual requiring little thought. It is an habitual response to an "A" sounded on some reliable instrument. The strings assume their accustomed tension; the fourths and fifths fall into line in a familiar order. Like many other ceremonies this prelude to playing is a familiar, comforting procedure.

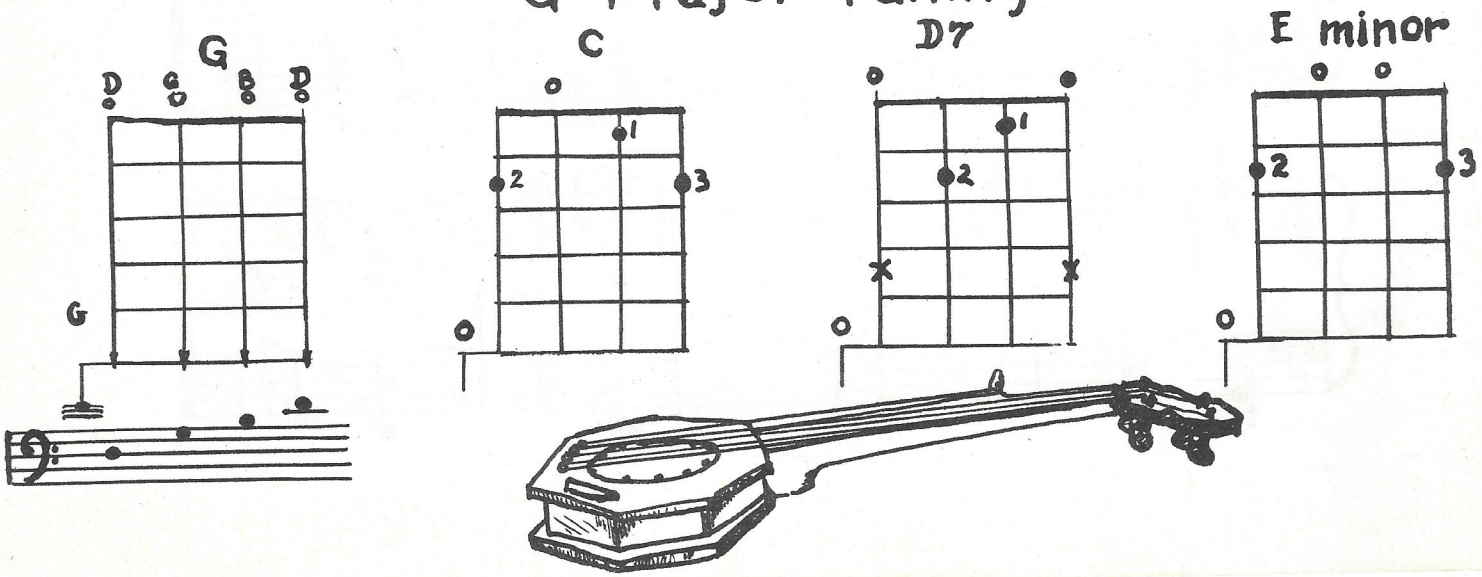
Even the ukelele player is assisted by a musical pattern, "dog afflicted with fleas." It is logical, therefore, that the novice five-string banjo picker should expect a similar routine for tuning his instrument. However, the five-string banjo is a folk instrument, and is unconventional in this respect.

Although many banjo-pickers in New York have come to regard the G major tuning as standard, I have found it is only one of many possible tunings. To date, I have, from folk musicians, learned twenty-four different ways of tuning the five-string banjo. I shall offer, here, nine of the most frequently used tunings. Unhampered by formal musical education, the folk musician roams freely through the musical gamut, tuning his instrument to suit his fancy.

These tunings are not to be regarded as absolute in pitch. With many banjo-pickers, pitch is merely relative, and intervals are often in fractions of the commonly accepted musical intervals. If you have ever heard a folk musician play on an unfretted banjo (or for that matter, an old-time fiddler playing country-style) you will know that even in our Occidental music, whole and half tones are not necessarily treated with deep respect.

In the following illustrations conventional symbols are used: a number next to a dot indicates the finger used (the index finger is #1, the middle finger #2, etc.); a circle at the end of a string indicates that the string is to be played unfretted. A cross means positions which are sometimes fingered, but in which fingering is optional. The fifth, or thumb-string, is rarely fretted, being usually picked by the right thumb and serving as a drone.

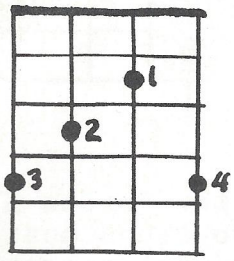
G Major Tuning



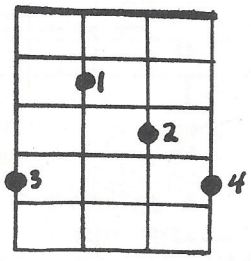
There are some movable chords in this tuning. They are most frequently used by plectrum banjoists who play with conventional picks in the manner of the tenor banjo, rather than plucking with the individual fingers and thumb of the right hand.

Movable Chords (No Thumb String)

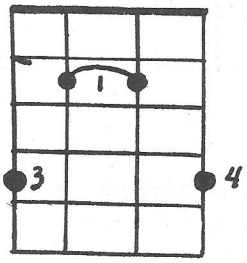
Major



Or

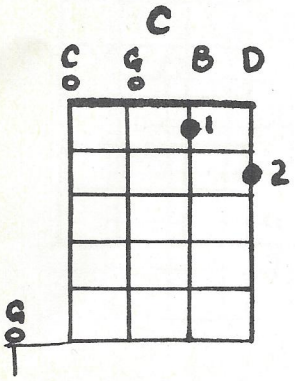


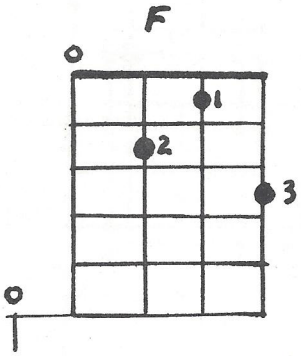
Minor

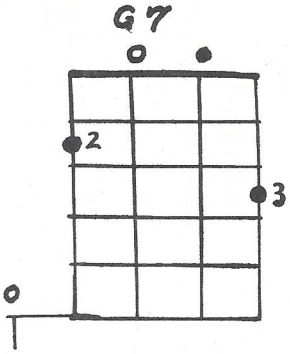


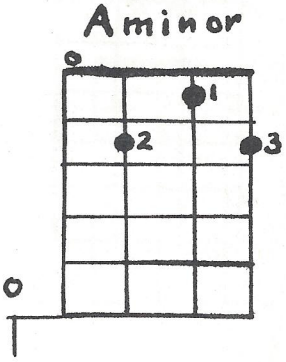
The following is one of three C tunings. Though it is quite popular it is the most cumbersome of the three, requiring more complicated fingering than the others. It has an advantage in that it requires but one adjustment; the lowering of the fourth string from D to C. Thus the shift from one key to another is made quickly.

C Major #1



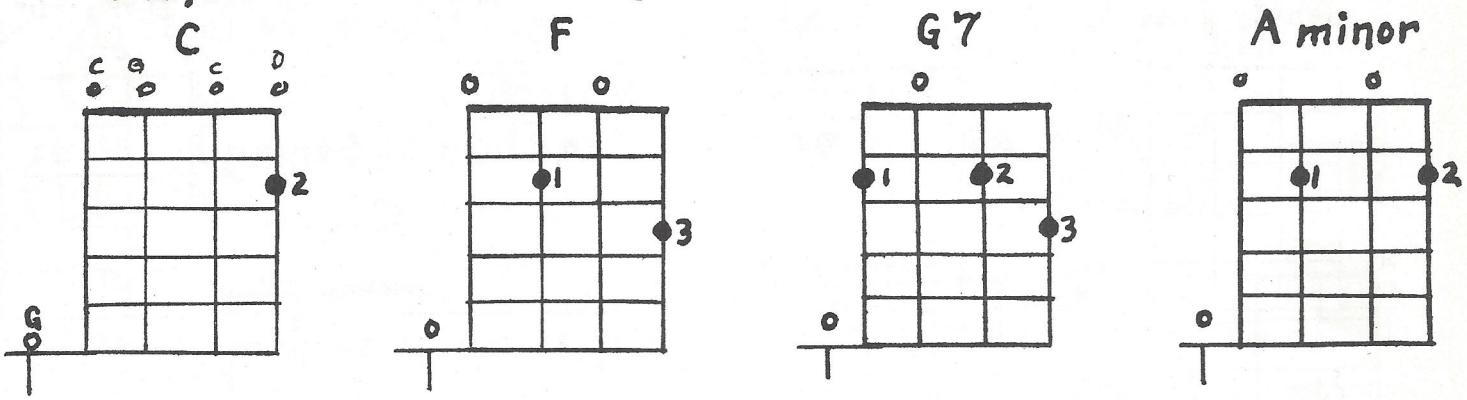






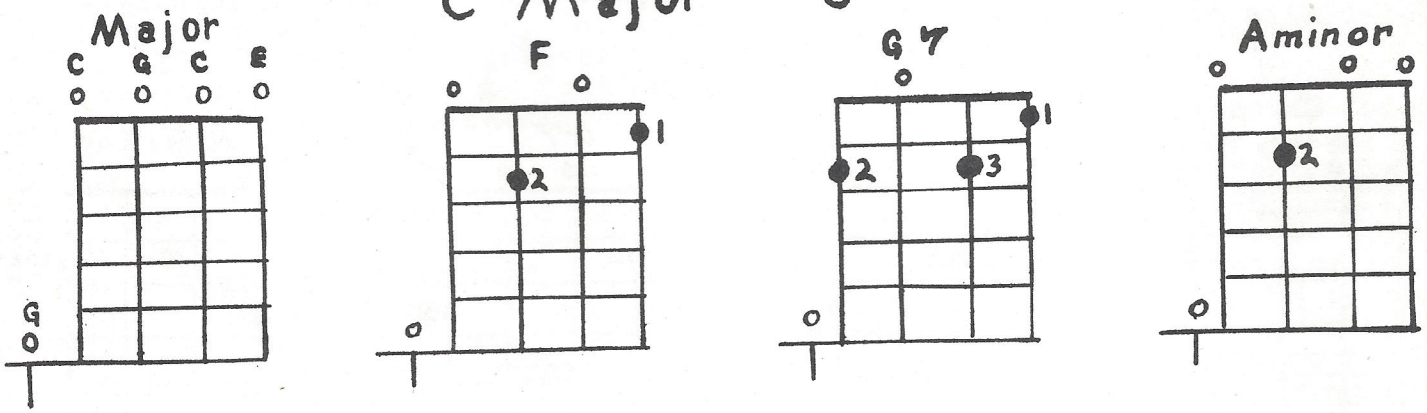
The following C major tuning is quite common. Since the tonic chord requires the use of only one finger it is very simple. This one fingered fretting permits the use of a trick called "hammering." In the melody, whenever an E on the D string is to be played, the open D string is plucked and then the finger is quickly slapped down to make the desired E. Thus the D becomes a grace note. This "hammering" give five-string banjo picking a distinctive flavor and can be used in all tunings, and almost incessantly. Sometimes the process is reversed; a fretted note is sounded and the finger quickly removed, allowing the open string to vibrate -called "cheating."

C Major #2

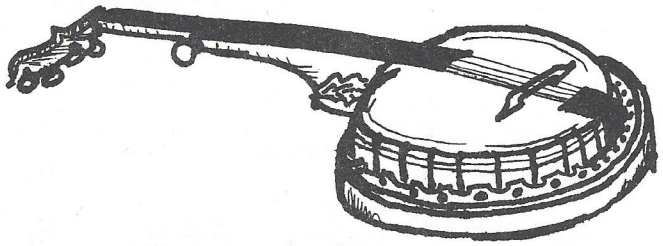


In the third C major tuning the unfretted strings form the open chord so dear to the heart of the five-string banjo picker. Without the thumb-string, this tuning corresponds to the lower four strings of a guitar tuned in the "cross E" tuning used by Negro blues musicians. It offers the most convenient fingering for the "walking bass" of blues and boogie-woogie music.

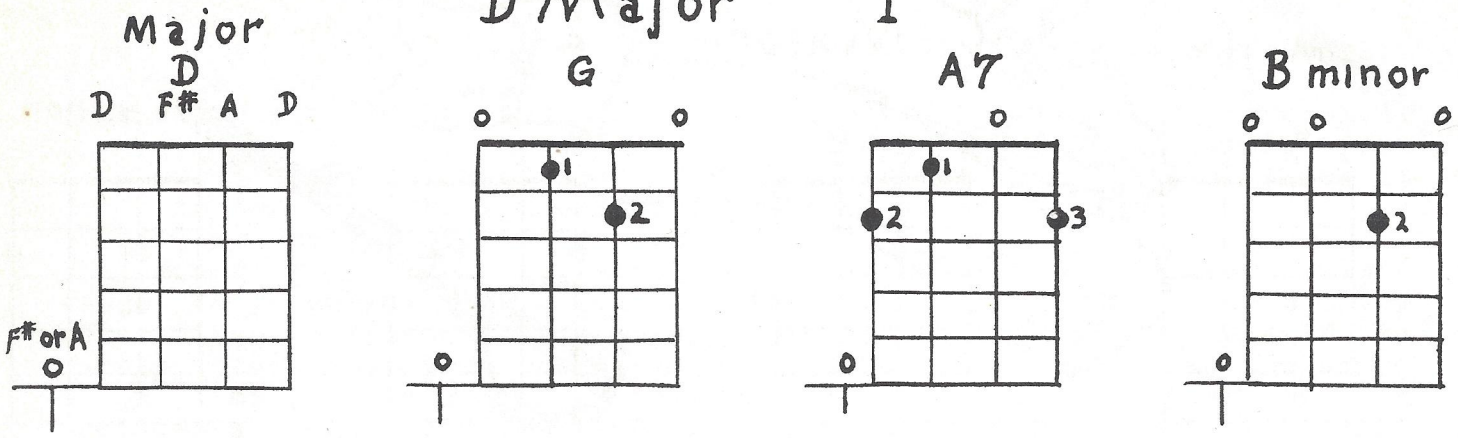
C Major #3



The thumb-string in the following D major tuning may be an octave above either the third or the fifth string. The mountaineer who showed me this tuning said, "Hit shore is lonesome sounding." It does seem sad and wistful, but perhaps that's because I play only mournful tunes in this variation of the D major tuning.

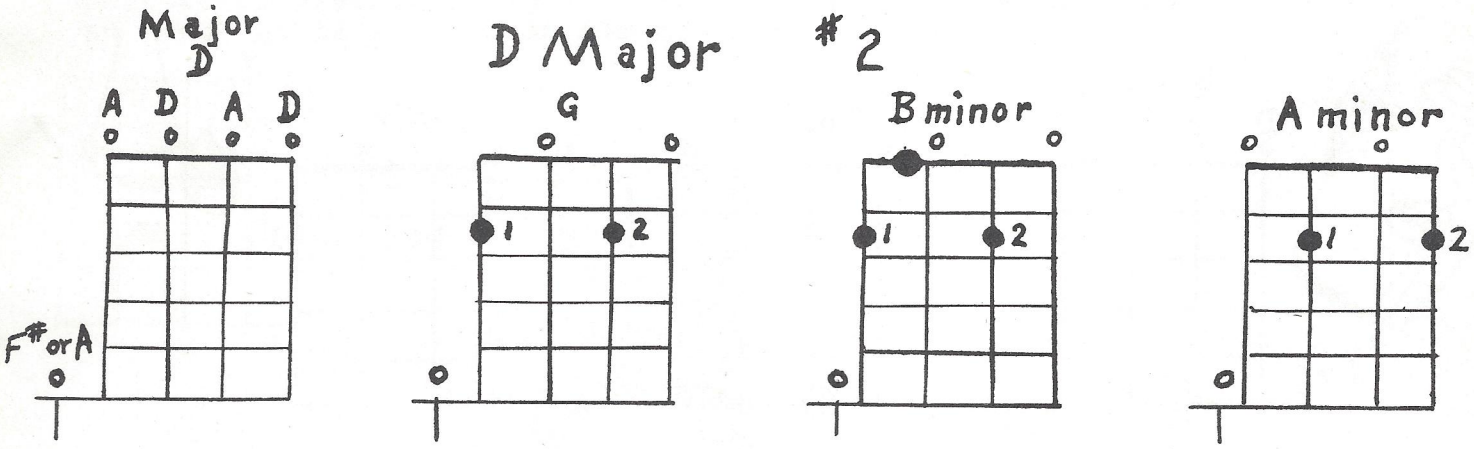


D Major #1



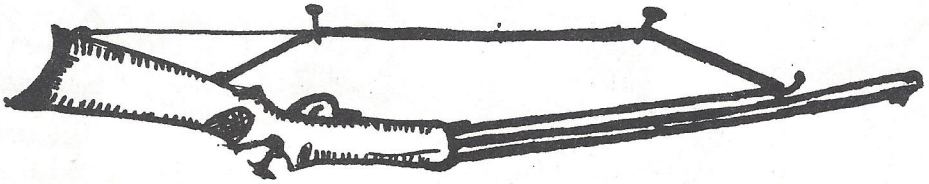
In the second D major tuning the third string is an octave below the first, and the fourth an octave besow the second. This peculiar tuning is notable for its incomplete chords and rather deep tones. It is used for tunes with great ranges, or for easy shifting between octaves.

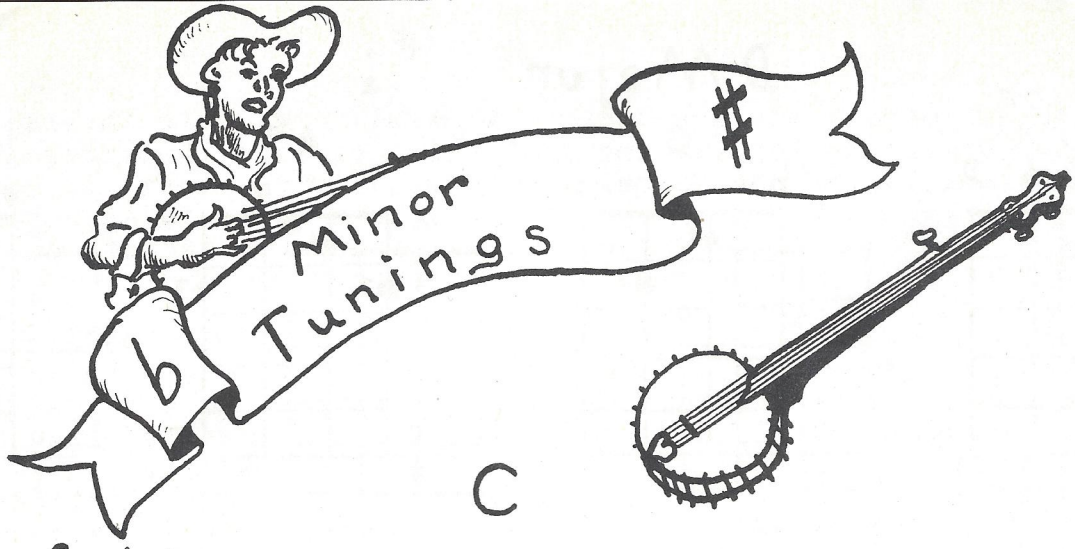
D Major #2



The unfretted C tuning #2 is often used for minor songs, with the fourth string raised, occasionally raised to F. Often only the melody note is fretted, although all the strings are struck.

Variations of this tuning often occur when a tune has a range too great for a particular tuning. The mountain musician will not hesitate to lower any string a whole or a half tone to accomodate the melody. This is frequently done to make possible the "hammering" mentioned above.



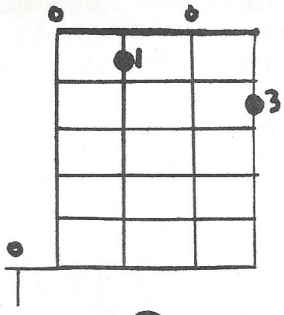


C

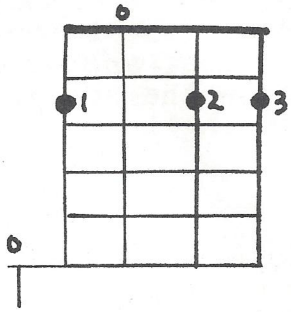
C minor

C G C Eb

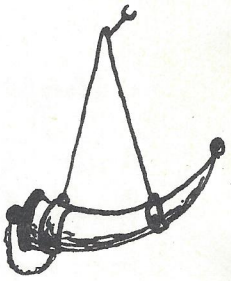
G



F minor



G7

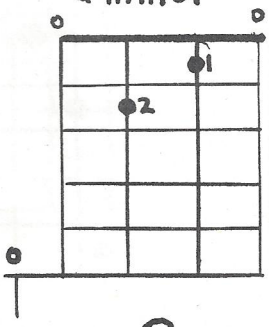


D

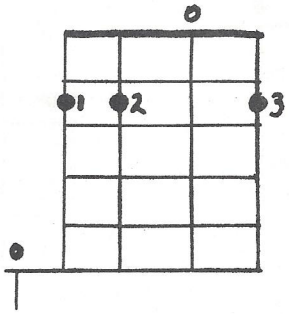
D minor

D F A D

D or F



G minor



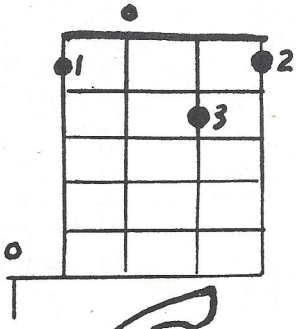
A7

G

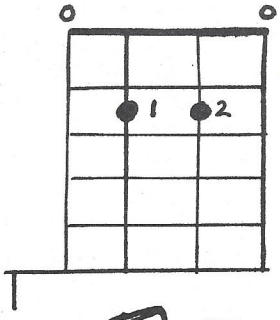
G minor

D G Bb D

G



c minor



D7

Of these minor tunings the G minor is the most popular among folk musicians in the mountains.

A music perfectionist may object to some of these unorthodox chords; my only defense is that they sound right on a five-string banjo. Many mountain banjo pickers never finger complete chords. They rarely place more than one finger at a time on the strings. This produces a characteristic style of playing which, once heard, is never forgotten. Many of the most exciting of the banjo folk tunes lose their flavor entirely when played upon a conventional instrument like a piano. Their weird, wild harmonies are toned down to the tempered scales of the keyboard, their peculiar accents are lost.

Banjo folk music, which to the uninitiated sounds quite strange, can get quite a grip on its admirers. This music is like bagpipe music, or like limburger cheese; a taste for it must be developed. Once this taste is acquired it can make incurable addicts of those it possesses.

The undeniably increased interest in folk music in our country has inspired many a youngster to acquire instruments like the banjo and guitar. Many a lover of folk music has awakened to find himself possessing a five-string banjo but discovers that there is little opportunity to gain formal instruction on the instrument. Few people are lucky enough to be able to sit by the hour at the side of a genuine folk musician and to absorb his style and mannerisms.

It is hoped that this article will inspire the novice banjoist to experiment with different melodies and unusual tunings.

Waves of the Ocean

This square dance is one we learned, many years ago, from Ralph Tefferteller. "Teffie" collected the dance in Tennessee and taught it to our group as an interesting demonstration dance. Any good Southern dance tune may be used for this dance, but we especially like "Old Granny Hare."

INTRODUCTION: Honor your partners, your corners the same,
All join hands and circle down the lane.

CALLS: (A) 1. Waves of the ocean, waves of the sea
Wave that pretty gal back to me.

2. Waves of the ocean, waves of the river
Swing that pretty gal, swing and swiver.

3. Waves of the ocean, waves of the shore
Swing that pretty gal and swing no more.
Circle four hands round.

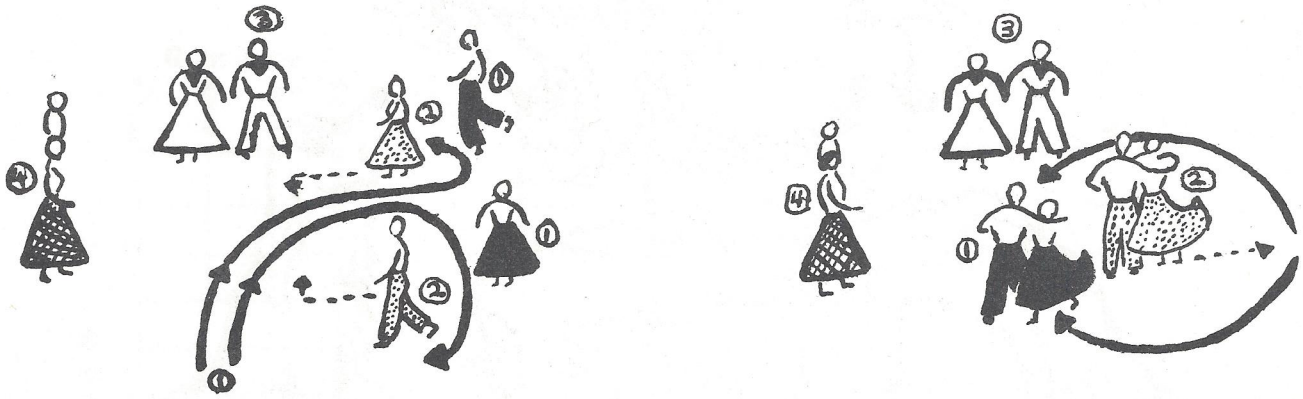
(B) On to the next (repeat from 1.)
Circle six hands round.

(C) On to the last (repeat from 1.)
Circle eight hands round.

CHORUS: Home swing and promenade.

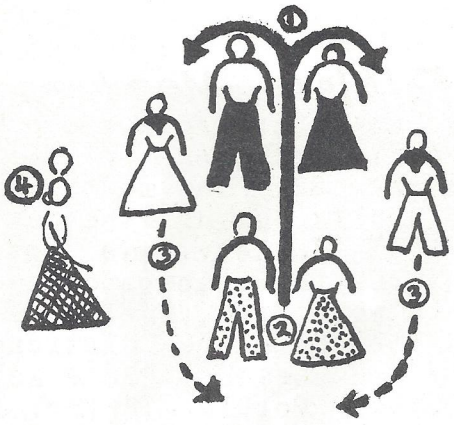
DESCRIPTION: (A) 1. The first couple moves to the second couple, passing between the dancers of the second couple. The first lady turns to her right and moves behind the second gent back into the center of the set. Her partner turns to his left and moves behind the second lady and returns to the center of the set. Swing!

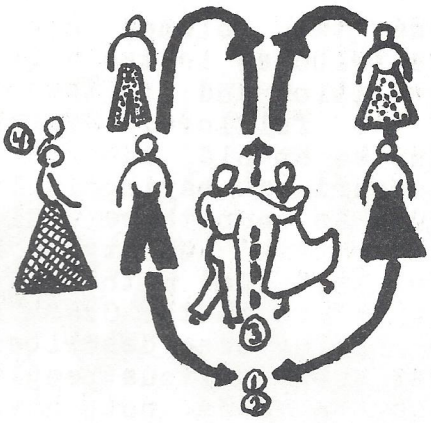
As soon as the first couple has moved between the second couple that couple moves directly forward to the center of the set. The second couple swings and continues to swing until in original place.



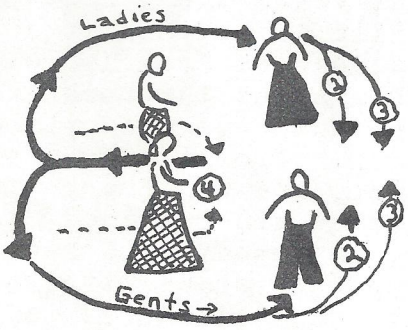
This figure is repeated for 2. and 3. with the second couple, then both couples join hands and circle once around to the left. Couple one moves to the third couple, followed by couple two.

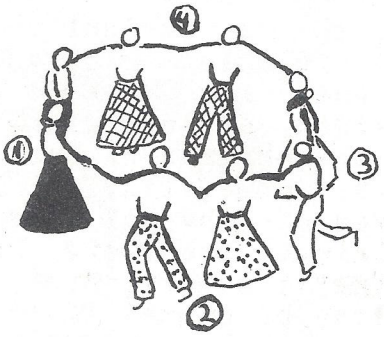
(B) Couple one goes between dancers of the third couple, followed by couple two. The third couple moves forward as described in (A). The entire figure is performed with the dancers moving between the third lady and gent. Then the three couples join hands and circle once around to the left. The first couple moves to the fourth, followed by the second and third couples.





(C) Couple one goes between dancers of the fourth couple, followed by the second and third couples. Perform the waves figure three times, then all join hands and circle once around to the left. All will now be in original positions in the set.





CHORUS: Home swing means-- join hands straight across with partners and turn once around, clockwise. (The gent will take his partner's right hand in his left, her left in his right.) Turn corners in the same manner, and all promenade, hands joined in skater's position, once around the set, counterclockwise.

A TREASURY OF AMERICAN SUPERSTITIONS. By Claudia de Lys. 494 pp. New York: The Philosophical Library. $5.00.

OZARK SUPERSTITIONS. By Vance Randolph. 367 pp. New York: Columbia University Press. $3.75.

These two volumes are impressive tributes to the strength of superstition and to the richness of its folklore. Mr. Randolph quotes an old man near Elsey, Missouri, as saying in 1944, "I'd just as soon there wouldn't be no cat runnin' acrost the road ahead of me." And although Mr. Randolph refers to the Ozark hill folk as having been described as "the most superstitious people in America," one does not have to travel to Missouri or Arkansas to find cat superstitions; or for that matter, superstitions about birds, bees, flowers, snakes, jewels, witches and numbers, to name a few of the categories which Miss de Lys takes up in her exhaustive work.

But, whatever sad conclusions the moralist may draw from the persistent cussedness with which superstitions hang on and keep growing, to the strdent of folklore the field is a rich and satisfying one. For Miss de Lys it has provided an opportunity to explore the origins of our latter day myths. Some, like the fabled nine lives of the cat, stem from the religious practices of ancient Egypt; others, such as the association of canned food with ptomaine poisoning, are but a few years old. Mr. Randolph, who has spent many years in the section he writes of, is content in the main to report what he has seen and heard. This makes for a very fascinating story. Both books are recommended for study, for entertainment, and for reference.

Herbert Terry

Notes of Interest

The month of March offers at least two concerts of interest to folklore fans. Burl Ives will give his annual Town Hall recital on Saturday evening, March 5, and Tom Scott will perform there on Thursdayevening, March 24th.

Folklore Meeting

The New York Folklore Society held an open meeting in New York on January 22. The meeting, held in the auditorium of the New York Historical Society, was informal and interesting. Papers on various subjects were read, including "Editing the Folklore Dictionary," (Mrs. Maria Leach); "Some Aspects of Political Folklore," (Mr. A. A. Hartwell): "Phantom Ships," (Mr. Ralph Childs); and "A Tribute to Bobby Edwards," (Dr. M. Jagendorf).

Pete Seeger sang folk songs for and with the audience, and Dr. H. W. Thompson chaired the session.

Dances of 1850

Several years ago Margot picked up the title of a booklet of old-fashioned dances from Maine. She knew nothingabout the book except its title, author, and place of publication. Prompted bv a sudden inspiration, she wrote a post card to the author and received, to her surprise, an immediate answer. Now we are happy to share with you the news that the little book is still available!

The pamphlet, entitled Ye Old-Fashioned Dances of 1850, is a collection of more than fifty contra dances, quadrilles, and cotillions as danced in Maine a century ago. The collection may be purchased from Frank E. Carville, Lisbon Road, Lewiston, Maine. The price is 25¢, but we suggest you add 10¢ to cover postage.